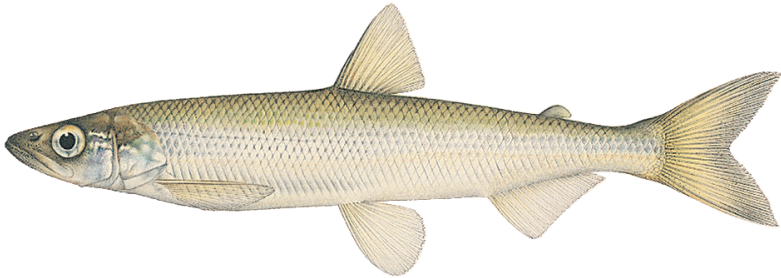


## **SMELT (family Osmeridae)**

### **Rainbow smelt**

*Osmerus mordax*



**Similar Species:** Lake whitefish and lake herring

**Identification:** Slender silvery body, adipose fin present, large scales. Rainbow smelt are smaller than either of the two similar species found in Lake Oahe.

Rainbow smelt are native to the Arctic Ocean and northern portions of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. They were introduced as a prey fish in Lake Sakakawea, North Dakota, and found their way downstream into the cool waters of Lake Oahe where they provide a source of prey for large predators such as northern pike, walleye, various trout, and chinook salmon. Rainbow smelt also have been found in Missouri River impoundments in South Dakota downstream from Lake Oahe but are less common in these waters. Rainbow smelt are schooling fish that prefer open water where they feed primarily on microscopic animals (zooplankton). Rainbow smelt commonly reach 6 to 8 inches in length and can live for up to 8 years.

